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MIDDLESEX COUNTY LIBRARIES

(A talk given before the Halifax Library Club by Mrs. Doreen M. Ibsen, formerly librarian of the Wembley Branch Library, London.)

The County Library service of Middlesex is one of the foremost in the British Isles and when the developing scheme of new branches is completed it will, I think, be the leading county library service.

This service functions in a part of Greater London which has developed by leaps and bounds since the First World War. The library service started in a humble way about 25 years ago, and has been developing since. The county's population is about 650,000. From 1931 when there were 3 branches it has grown until the present day when there are 17. The book stock was 150,000 then and is now 500,000. There are 39 school centres where the stock is changed at 3 monthly intervals. These are run by voluntary workers. In some places, due to wartime conditions, they have been sadly neglected.

The library service also supplies 203 primary and secondary schools of the county; the stock in these being changed every 6 months. There is also an assortment of about 50 hospitals and institutions which are supplied with books by the county library. Their stock varies from 30 to 1,000 books per library.

His Majesty's Prison at Feltham is supplied with books from Middlesex County Library stock, and I may add here that there are some highly intellectual requests among their requisitions.

There is great difficulty in deciding how to spend the book fund. This fund was around \$50,000 in 1940, but I do not know what it is now. Previously we bought quite a lot of stock from Boot's Libraries and the Times Book Club but that is well nigh impossible as these books are

very precious now and the second-hand book-market is practically a racket. However the position is gradually improving and there are quite a few reprints coming out.

The number of borrowers is growing all the time. In 1940 there were 200,000 members, and there must be many more now.

Here I'd like to mention our students service. The students requisitions are sent to H.Q. once a week, about 500 of them each week, and at H.Q. they really go to work on them. When the book is located in H.Q.'s records it is sent out on the van's weekly trip. Or, if it is found from files at H.Q. to be in stock at another branch, that branch is notified and it is set aside until the van calls there for it. This van does a complete circuit of the branches every Tuesday, the round trip being about 100 miles. On this trip requisitions are taken out from H.Q. to the various branches, and requisitions lists taken back to H.Q. So far, I have been assuming that a certain book has been located in the County Library stock. If this is not so the requisition is sent to the Regional Bureau; of which Middlesex County Libraries is a member. The libraries belonging to the Regional Bureau are those who have agreed to put their stock at the disposal of other libraries and in this way they have a larger stock to draw on. Apart from municipal and county libraries there are University and Outlier libraries who are members. The H.Q. of these is the National Central Library, in London. So you see every effort is made to satisfy our student demands.

Now let me tell you about our County Library H.Q. It is located in a converted workman's institution! This no doubt sounds very strange; for many years we have been trying to achieve a new building and in 1939 it looked as if it was going to be possible, but the outbreak of war changed all that. So in these extremely overcrowded conditions the County Librarian and his H.Q. staff have worked like Trojans to fulfil wartime reading demands. A superhuman job has been done by these folks; the staff was reduced from 15 to 7 and yet they had to handle about 2,000 books per day in adult circulation alone. The clerical work is very extensive. The complete county library staff now numbers 80 in all.

Passing from headquarters to the 17 branch libraries: of these 6 have been opened in wartime, which I think is a very good effort. Our branches vary a great deal in type from a 600 year old Tythe barn complete with original oaken beams to the very latest in library designs. One of modern design is Kenton Branch Library where I worked as Senior Assistant for nearly two years. This branch was opened in January, 1939. Before the opening it was decided that a full time staff of three would be adequate, but when it

was opened, borrowers came in such numbers that the staff had to have additional help and the permanent staff of this branch now numbers 8. The average daily issue is 1,500 books and with a Saturday issue of 2,500 to 3,000 books. This branch is of unusual design, being L shaped with the entrance in the angle of the L. There is the Main Lending Library with a small reference section. Reading tables are in this part. There is in addition a very good children's library. The staff room and committee room are in a tower above the entrance. Its lines are very modern and there is lots of light. The wood is light oak and the top of the counter has inlaid green linoleum which is easy to keep clean and looks very effective.

Another branch library which I think would be of interest to you is Wembley Branch Library. Here I was branch librarian until I left England. This is an unusual example of a county library working in co-operation with the local municipal authorities. Wembley has only recently become a borough of Greater London, and as such is entitled to have its own municipal library - so Middlesex County Libraries have a branch in the civic hall of Wembley. This Town Hall is a comparatively recent building and the library was opened in October, 1939. The daily issue here is about 1,000 with a Saturday issue of 2,000. The library is part of the Town Hall but has an entirely separate entrance. There is the main library with a display counter, a large student's section, a children's library and a luxurious reading room with magazines and the daily papers.

Children's library work is something which greatly interests me and at each of the branches where I worked we organized story hours which were very popular. At Kenton the members of the story hour acted in scenes from Alice in Wonderland, and were a great success.

I imagine our system of charging is perhaps a little different from yours. To join our library a person must be or have his card signed by a taxpayer. When this is done the borrower is given three tickets, one fiction and two non-fiction tickets. Inside each book is the book pocket which is removed when the borrower has selected it and then the borrower's ticket is placed inside this pocket. All book pockets are filed after the date, fiction is in alphabetical order of the author and non-fiction in classified order. Books are issued for 14 days, if not required by another borrower. If books are kept out over 14 days without renewal there is a fine of one shilling per book per week. Non-fiction books and classics can be reserved and the borrower is notified when they come in. The classification used is Dewey with adaptations to suit the Middlesex needs. The 900 class is used only for history; travel and biography have the letters X and B respectively for their classification. Poetry, drama

and essays have letters P, D and E and are then arranged alphabetically by the author. General books on literature are placed under 800.

Books are accessioned and catalogued at H.Q. and are sent out to the branches numbered and labelled. On arrival at the branches the non-fiction books are catalogued for the branch catalogue and are then ready for the shelves.

Several of the branches have organized gramophone circles and play reading circles, the records being supplied from H.Q. There is a collection of about 1,000 records at H.Q. These are used mostly by secondary schools in their musical appreciation classes. Most of our branches carry a good stock of musical scores.

Middlesex has functioned as normally as possible under the trying conditions of wartime. Times of closing had to be changed many times during the Blitz and VI and V2 raids. Borrowers and staff have sat together under tables until the All Clear has sounded, and have probably emerged better friends for it. Led as they are by an able chief, I do not hesitate to say they will expand and develop to wider territory in the future.

THE CANADIAN LIBRARY CONFERENCE AT VANCOUVER
by Sister Frances Dolores, Reserve Mines, N.S.

The beautiful city of Vancouver and the campus of the University of British Columbia made an appropriate setting for the second annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association held from June 23 - 27th. Our national library organisation, brought into existence last June at Hamilton, Ontario, still vibrates with new life and fresh hopes which seem to find added strength and inspiration out here in the exuberant and invigorating atmosphere of the young and energetic West. Although delegates had been warned before coming to be prepared for showers, as "The Evergreen Playground" cannot keep green without rain, the weather-man surprised us all with a week of brilliant sunshine.

Surprisingly enough too, considering the distance that had to be covered, registration figures reached nearly two hundred, with approximately one hundred coming from the provinces east of Manitoba. However of this latter encouraging number, eighty were delegates from the province of Ontario itself -- whilst only four were present from our Maritime Provinces.

The Conference got away to a happy start with a planned trip to the Fraser Valley Union Library - a delightful drive several miles outside of the city of Vancouver. Most of us who have been following the development of successful regional

library demonstrations know that this was the first Regional Library scheme in Canada and was started as a Carnegie demonstration in 1930. It was taken over by the people themselves on a taxation basis in 1934. Some of us have also seen the film entitled "Library on wheels" which attempts to give a picture of the Fraser Valley Library headquarters and of some of its branches and services in action. A visitor, however, seeing at first hand this library organisation, born in the midst of a depression, cannot help feeling that although its simple frame building and modest equipment may be primitive in comparison with those of the large urban libraries, yet it is performing a vital service and steadily taking a permanent place in every one of the scattered communities which it serves. In thus reaching out to the people of the Valley, it is as it were giving a tangible proof of its realisation of the necessity and importance of libraries, as expressed in the present programme for library development out in British Columbia. "...It must be obvious that it is to the public libraries that most people beyond school age who wish to continue their education must turn. We hear much about Adult Education, but an effective program of adult education must be handicapped, if not positively ineffective, unless it is backed up by the resources of adequate public libraries". A highlight of this trip was the formal opening of the new branch library at Mission (one of the thriving Fraser Valley fruit-growing districts) by our C.L.A. President, Miss Freda Waldon, in the presence of a large gathering of visitors and delegates.

This note of realisation of the need for adequate library facilities in Canada was further emphasized in the capable and comprehensive Report of the President, Miss Freda F. Waldon. The President's Report was devoted chiefly to urging the establishment of a National Library for Canada - since the Canadian Library Association is a national organisation and Canada is the only reputable country today who does not possess a repository of the kind exemplified by the Library of Congress in the United States or the British Museum in Great Britain (although our aspirations at present are on a much more modest scale). Before leading up to this keynote, Miss Waldon stated that "it would be easy to take a gloomy view of the general state of library services in Canada. We are all haunted by those figures: 50% of all Canadians and 95% of rural Canadians without public library services... On the other hand, it is a distinct gain that we are becoming increasingly aware of our deficiencies... The publication of "CANADA NEEDS LIBRARIES" and "RURAL CANADA NEEDS LIBRARIES" may prove to have been a turning point (in library history)... It is encouraging that nearly every provincial government is showing more interest in libraries. This interest takes many forms. Whereas for many years, there were only two provinces with library officials, now there are five: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. Quebec has a Provin-

cial reference library, Alberta has established a Provincial Library Board and Manitoba is considering a Public Libraries Act...", whilst Saskatchewan has already established the first Provincial official for the supervision of school libraries. The President remarked hopefully that "in the nearly-perfect-state, librarians will not have to spend such an inordinate amount of time and energy just to assure support for an extension of libraries, but will be able to get on with their real job which is the collection and organisation of the tools of learning, and the increase of their use".

The Conference Guest Speaker was Miss Helen Margaret Harris, Chief Librarian of the Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville, Tennessee, and Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Library Council. Miss Harris, whose leadership in East Tennessee has been marked by social vision and awareness of the many forces which contribute to local community life, possesses a dynamic personality which she modestly accounted for by saying: "Down our way, the people have a word to describe what might well be one of the requisites of a good librarian - or of any social leader -- it is "folksy". Well, she is a "folksy" sort of person whose enthusiasm and social interest seem contagious.

There were other outstanding items on the agenda of this the Second Annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association including the penetrating account of the work of UNESCO by Miss Margaret Gill who represented Canada at the Paris meeting of the Organisation last Fall, and the interesting and stimulating reports of work done by such indefatigable workers as Miss Elizabeth Morton, our Executive Secretary. There were Committee Meetings of Special Interest Groups, Book Displays and Film Showings, but over and above these and even the formal addresses and discussions, attendance at a meeting of this kind pays dividends not to be lightly evaluated. There is the exchange of ideas between persons working for a common purpose from coast to coast of Canada; there is the stimulation of enthusiasm and inspiration for the work that still lies ahead; there is the general realisation that library work is an integral part, indeed almost a preliminary condition of the new life that is stirring in Canada -- the beginning of a distinctive national culture of our own -- a culture which we hope is going to flower some day in a peaceful world. It was with this air of renewed optimism that we set off to gain further experience on our national library problems from "our good neighbor to the South" at the American Library Association Conference in San Francisco, scheduled for the following week and promising almost too many treats for our professional appetites.

THE CANADIAN LIBRARY CONFERENCE 1947
by Miss Jean Gill, Librarian,
Legislative & Public Library, Charlottetown

It was indeed a privilege and also a pleasure for me to attend the 2nd Annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association which met in Vancouver, June 24th to the 26th; to meet the librarians from across Canada and to share in their problems.

The first day we had a most interesting hour devoted to building and architecture in which very useful and informative suggestions were exchanged. Several guiding principles were suggested as to building namely: to have a maximum of light, maximum of book space, the walls so treated that they may be used for pictures, also newer aids such as music room, room for meetings, and (extremely important) kitchen facilities for the staff. Libraries should be built as Community Centres, thus bringing together all the cultural arts and making their appeal more human. This was followed by a meeting on audio-visual media. Today the film is all important in connection with education. The cataloguing of films was discussed and a suggestion made that the catalogue card be shipped with the film.

A luncheon meeting at the Faculty Club was attended by official representatives of the Library Associations to discuss their co-operation with the Canadian Library Association Bulletin. During discussion Miss Morton, Secretary of the Canadian Library Association said that many requests had come in urging that the Bulletin be issued more often during the year, and asking better co-operation with the Provincial Associations in the way of contribution of news.

William O. Mitchell author of "Who Has Seen the Wind" spoke on "The Author Looks at the Problems of Authors in Contemporary Canada". He told how shocked he was to learn that authors publishing in Canada sometimes sell only 500 copies, and a good sale is 5,000. Too many Canadian firms are merely agents of British and American publishers, and authors have to go abroad with material which often has not the appeal there that it would have to an audience of his own countrymen. Many Canadian authors write part-time only and do not have guidance or help from any established organization.

Organizing Library Service with Miss Helen Harris, consultant, was very interesting and informing. The different provinces were represented and a brief report of the development of the various libraries was given and discussed.

At a luncheon meeting the micro-filming of historical newspapers, and a suitable location for the camera was discussed. The discussion resulted in an agreement between Mr. Sanderson and Mr. Hamilton to look for the necessary

space, and experienced help in the same place. No definite plan was arrived at regarding the sale of the films. The general feeling seemed to be that the files of newspapers, because of their frailty, should not be sent out of the Provinces for microfilming but should be done locally.

Mr. Roderick L. Haig-Brown spoke on the writing of children's books. His address was very informative and quite amusing. He suggested the out-of-doors as a field for children's writing. He also spoke about the children's books he had written including the one entitled "Starbuck Valley Winter" published in 1943.

"Canadian Literature of Today and Tomorrow" was a very scholarly address by Mr. A.J.M. Smith. Mr. Smith in his remarks mentioned several Canadian authors of note among them Frederick Philip Grove and Morley Callaghan. Grove's "Master of the Mill" he thought was the finest problem novel produced in Canada. The novel is filled with important themes and real characters. Thomas Raddall's "His Majesty's Yankees" in Mr. Smith's opinion is ahead of any historical novel produced in Canada. Mr. Smith mentioned a number of Canadian poets. E. J. Pratt and Kenneth Leslie being two of worth.

The final address was "A Mandate for the Future" by Dr. W. Kaye Lamb. Included in his remarks was the need of a National Library. Dr. Lamb also suggested a proper system for keeping Canadian documents. He said the one mandate in adult education is books.

In a brief account such as I have given here you will realize there is much that I have had to omit. Many meetings coincided and naturally I could not attend them all, however the principle theme underlying the Conference generally was the National Library which is the goal towards which we all must strive.

NEWS NOTES

Maritime librarians attending the Canadian Library Association Conference at Vancouver were: Miss E.M.A. Vaughan, Librarian, Free Public Library, Saint John, N. B.; Sister Francis de Sales, Director of the School of Library Science, Mt. St. Vincent College, Halifax; Sister Francis Dolores, Librarian of the People's Library, Reserve Mines, Cape Breton; and Miss Jean C. Gill, Librarian, Legislative and Public Library, Charlottetown, P. E. I.

Miss Ellen Webster who graduated as a Bachelor of Arts from Dalhousie University this spring left for Rochester, N. Y. late in June. Under a scholarship at the Public Library there Miss Webster will spend a year gaining experience in all departments of a large public library.

Miss Mary Fraser, formerly of the Dalhousie University Library Staff, has accepted a position at the Skidmore College Library, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.

Vernon Lea, 18, of Charlottetown, a summertime employee of the Prince Edward Island Libraries, died as the result of injuries received when the library truck was hit by a train on July 21. Four members of the library staff were on their way to a branch library to carry out the annual exchange of books when the collision occurred. Elmer Smith was seriously injured, but he is expected to recover. Grace Campbell and Alberta Bryant were able to go home after a few weeks hospitalization.

News of the work of our former president Miss Marion Gilroy appears in the "Saskatchewan News" the provincial government publication: "Existing public library services, and the attitude of rural municipalities toward the proposed regional library systems, is the subject of a survey being made by Miss M. Gilroy, supervisor of the regional library division.

Miss Gilroy has already visited the eastern and central sections of the province where public libraries are operated, and will visit western portions of the province as soon as possible."

The title of "meanest thief" was earned by the person who removed some plumbing equipment from the building being renovated by the Halifax Junior League for use as a Children's Library. The materials had been donated by Halifax firms to refit the building known as the Duke of Kent Building, which was erected by Queen Victoria's father about a hundred and fifty years ago.

Among Maritimers planning to attend library school during 1947-48 are Miss Marjorie Power, Charlottetown, and Miss Mary Elizabeth Cameron, Petite Riviere, N. S. who are going to McGill and Toronto, respectively.

Over the Library Desk

A small boy returned a well-worn library book. The Librarian looked at the book and at the boy and said "This is rather technical, isn't it?" Planting his feet firmly on the floor the boy replied "It was that way when I got it".
(Gaylord's Triangle)

Librarian's Ingenuity

The Massachusetts Library Bulletin offers a device for those who have found their work filing cards in the public catalog constantly interrupted by borrowers asking for information. In one library the cataloguer puts on her hat and coat before proceeding to her work at the catalog cabinet.
